



7466.181

Research
Library

Accessions

(91,354)

Shelf No.

74664181



GIVEN BY

Anna French
Feb. 24, 1869.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
Boston Public Library

THE PROPER MODE OF CONDUCTING MISSIONS TO THE HEATHEN.

A

SERMON

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

7/1/66 1821

Society for Propagating the Gospel

AMONG THE

INDIANS AND OTHERS IN NORTH AMERICA,

NOVEMBER 5, 1829.

BY BENJAMIN B. WISNER,
PASTOR OF THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH IN BOSTON.

BOSTON: PUTNAM & HUNT.

.....
1829.

January 1822.

AT a meeting of the Society, November 5th, 1829.

Voted, That the SECRETARY and TREASURER be a committee to present the thanks of the Society to the Rev. Dr. Wisner for his Sermon delivered before them this day, and to request a copy for the press

ALDEN BRADFORD, *Secretary.*

SERMON.



MICAH IV, 1—4.

In the last days, it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills ; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob ; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths : for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off : and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks ; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree ; and none shall make them afraid : for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.

IN this, as in many other passages of holy Scripture, is predicted a period, when genuine Christianity, with its blessed influences on the temporal condition and the eternal prospects of men, shall be diffused among all nations : A period, when the benefits of intellectual and moral elevation shall be every where enjoyed ; when the true God shall, every where, be known, and worshipped, and obeyed ; when the duties of domestic, and social, and civil relations shall be, every where, understood and performed ; when governments shall be modelled and administered on just and benevolent principles ; when war and its attendant miseries shall have entirely ceased, and tyranny, oppression, persecution, bigotry, and cruelty be done away ; when business shall be conducted without contention, dishonesty

and covetousness,—with the design to promote the *permanent* interests of those engaged in it, and the general good ; when the families of the earth shall be the abodes of piety, and comfort, and love ;—a period when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,” and “the people shall be all righteous,” and “all the ends of the world shall see” and rejoice in “the salvation of our God.” Mighty, indeed, must be the revolution that shall accomplish all this. But let not the benevolent heart despond. “The mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it :” and “that which he hath spoken, he will also bring to pass ; that which he hath purposed, he will also do.”

How will he accomplish the glorious result ?

The efficient agency will be that of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to give to men the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, and make them willing in the day of his power. “Not by might, nor by power, but *by my Spirit*, saith the Lord of hosts.” “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, that *I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh* ;” and then “that great and notable day of the Lord” shall “come.”

But God usually works by means. He has uniformly, hitherto, dispensed spiritual blessings to men by the instrumentality of their fellow-men ; and this gracious method of procedure, there is no reason to expect, will be discontinued. We are expressly assured it will be employed in effecting the glorious result predicted in our text. “The law” is to “go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” The change foretold in the character and condition of the nations, is to be effected by means of “the law,” and “the word of the Lord.” And these are to “go forth of Zion,” and “from Jerusalem :” the means which it has been determined to employ, are to be put and continued in operation, by those already blessed with the knowledge and the happy influences of the true religion.

It must, then, be interesting to every Christian, and to every philanthropist living in a Christian country, to inquire, how is this instrumentality to be employed? To what end, and in what manner, shall we direct our efforts, that they may contribute most efficiently to the extension of religion and happiness among the nations? Shall our primary object be to *civilize** or to *christianize* them? And when we come to teach them the doctrines of religion,—whether at the commencement of our efforts for their improvement, or at a subsequent period,—shall we inculcate only the simpler and more general principles of our faith? or shall we, at once, present and urge upon their acceptance its most sublime and distinctive truths?

Let us give to these questions a brief and candid examination.

I. *First.* In employing our instrumentality to extend the temporal and spiritual blessings of christianity to the uncivilized and idolatrous nations of the earth, **SHALL WE MAKE IT OUR PRIMARY OBJECT TO CIVILIZE OR TO CHRISTIANIZE THEM?**

On this point, you are aware that directly opposite opinions have been advanced and advocated, by persons professing the same desire to witness the universal diffusion of civilization and genuine religion. On the one hand, it has been maintained, that the way “to teach Christianity to barbarous and savage nations” is, to “begin with civilizing them—educating and instructing them in the useful arts.”† “The order of providence clearly recommends, that those children of penury should first get into easier circumstances, and then be made converts to religious tenets.”‡ “It is

* Uncivilized Heathen are chiefly referred to in this discourse, because the efforts of the Society before which it was preached, for the conversion of the Heathen, are, by its charter, required to be directed to the North American Indians. As, however, many of the remarks to be made will be equally applicable to missions among civilized Heathen, these will be incidentally referred to.

† Edinburgh Review, Vol. 21—page 66. ‡ Do. Vol. 8—page 434.

by *this* kind of practical instruction alone, that those in a certain state of ignorance and barbarism are to be gained over to the truth ; and, till a similar course is followed, our Missionary and our Bible societies may expend thousands and tens of thousands, to no purpose, but to manifest the goodness of their intentions, and their total ignorance of the means which ought to have been pursued.”* On the other hand, it is contended, that, in all our efforts to meliorate the condition of idolatrous and savage nations, we should make it our *first* and *great* object to christianize them ; carrying with us, indeed, and recommending by example and instruction, the arts and comforts of civilized life, but making their improvement in these respects only a secondary thing,—viewing it as a result that will be easily attained, and will follow, almost of course, when they are brought to receive in their hearts the softening and elevating truths of religion.

Which of these directly opposite views is correct ?

The readiest and most satisfactory way to decide the question is to appeal to facts. We might, indeed, argue from the nature of the case ; and shew, we think conclusively, that true civilization can be effected only by changing the dispositions of barbarians ; and that the most direct, and in fact the only efficient method of accomplishing this, is to bring the powerful motives of the Gospel to bear directly on their hearts. But we are not particularly fond of *a priori* reasoning, and have no disposition to resort to it, however easily and successfully it might be done, when we can appeal to facts. And on this subject there are facts in abundance, furnished by an experience of eighteen hundred years. To facts, therefore, we appeal.

1. And the first fact to which I would direct your attention is, the striking and very instructive one, that, *in the*

* Edinburgh Review, Vol. 21—page 66. See also the Discourse preached before this Society, in 1823, by the Rev. Thaddeus Mason Harris, D. D. pp. 8, 9.

commission given to the Apostles and their successors by the Saviour, and in the history transmitted to us in the New Testament of its early execution, there is not one word about civilizing men ; although the Gospel was to be, and was in fact, carried by the Apostles to savage tribes as well as to the then civilized nations.* The command of the Savior is, “ Go ye,”—not to the nations which have been prepared for your coming by civilization,—but, “ Go ye into all the world,”—to savages as well as to civilized men.—And do what ? First civilize those whom you find sunk in barbarism, and teach the true philosophy to those whom you find more refined ; † and thus prepare them for receiving my religion ? No ; but, “ Go ye into all the world, and *preach the Gospel to every creature.*” To all alike, savage and civilized, proclaim, at once and continually, the good news of salvation through my atoning blood. And the history of the proceedings of the Apostles in executing this commission, under the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit, among savage as well as civilized nations, is,—not that they abstained from “ preaching christianity ” till they had taught the civilized the true philosophy, and the barbarous “ the emollient arts of life ;” but, “ they went forth, and *preached every where,*” that men “ should *repent, and turn to God,* and do works meet for *repentance ;*” “ *not knowing any thing among* ” those to whom they went, from the beginning to the end of their continuance with them, “ *save Jesus Christ, and him crucifi-*

* Paul, we know from Galatians i, 17, preached the Gospel in Arabia. There is also reason to believe that he visited Spain on the same benevolent errand. And if he did not introduce Christianity into Britain, there is satisfactory evidence that it was successfully propagated among its then barbarous inhabitants in the age of the Apostles. In the same age also, and no doubt by the Apostles, Christianity was introduced among several of the then uncivilized tribes north and east of Palestine.

† This, it has been maintained, should be the first step in attempting to propagate Christianity among civilized Heathen. “ Instead of sending missionaries for the immediate purpose of preaching Christianity, even in its simple elements, let the remuneration that is now divided among twenty, be given to two, or to three, who shall be educated for the service. Let them be made masters of natural philosophy in all its branches. Let them be thoroughly acquainted with the science of metaphysics. Let them be deeply read in history. Let them be, at the same time, what are called practical men ; men who know the world, and human nature. And, let

ed." And, though "the Jews required a sign, and the Greeks sought after wisdom" or philosophy, yet they "preached Christ crucified; counting that the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

Now, with these facts in view, can it be believed that it was the intention of Jesus Christ, that his Apostles should make it the first object of their labors among idolatrous and barbarous tribes to civilize them, and among Heathen nations already civilized to teach them the true philosophy, and thus prepare them for the reception of his religion; and that the Apostles did in fact proceed thus in executing his commission? How manifest is it that he intended they should, and that they did in fact, make it their first and great object among all people to whom they went, savage as well as civilized, to make known to them, and to press upon their immediate acceptance, the true religion? And this command is the commission and the directory, and the proceedings of the Apostles in executing it are the model, of all propagators of Christianity among the nations, to the end of the world.

But, I hear it said, "That was the age of miracles." And what if it was? Does that fact render the commission of Christ and the example of the Apostles no guide to us? Where, then, is the commission under which we are to act, and the inspired example we are to follow, in completing

them be Christians, without any of the narrowness of bigotry. Let these men be sent, to be companions, and friends, and teachers, among *enlightened* Mahomedans and Heathens. Let them go among them, to live as Heathens live, in regard to all that is innocent; and to impart, to those who are capable of receiving it, a knowledge of the history, and of the philosophy, which are received in the Christian world. A few such missionaries, I think, would, in no long time, do much to unsettle, and raise the whole foundation of Brahminical faith, in minds which could act directly and powerfully, as Europeans or Americans cannot act, upon the lower orders of society. And in no long time might they be instrumental of filling its place with the pure and more rational faith of the Gospel. I believe, indeed, that they would at least do more, within a few years, in preparation for the extension of Christianity, than a hundred missionaries, employed as most missionaries now are, would accomplish in a century." Christian Examiner, Vol. 1—pp. 190, 191.

the work of spreading the blessings of Christianity through the earth ? And where is the place in which Jesus Christ or his Apostles have said, or intimated, that a different method was to be pursued in propagating his religion when miracles should cease ? And who can believe that they intended that the benevolent work should be continued till it is completed, and that such a change in the method of proceeding would be indispensable, and yet not an intimation of it is to be found, in the discourses of the Saviour, or in the writings of the Apostles ?

Nor is this the only radical mistake involved in your objection. It implies, if it has any force, that miracles have a direct and certain efficacy in the conversion of men. How, then, was it that the great body of the Israelites who passed through the Red Sea, and stood at the foot of Sinai, and witnessed Jehovah's continual wonders in the wilderness, remained in unbelief ? How was it that the cities in which most of the Saviour's mighty works were done, incurred a heavier doom than Sodom and Gomorrah ? How is it that miracles are never again to be wrought in effecting the accomplishment of God's gracious designs respecting this rebellious world ? The truth is, miracles never were the direct instrument in the conversion of men. They were, in fact, and were intended to be, to those in whose presence they were wrought, precisely what they are to us who are furnished with undoubted evidence of their having been wrought, viz. an attestation to the divine commission of the Prophets and Apostles, whose instructions were delivered orally to the first converts to Christianity, and have been transmitted to us in the holy Scriptures : *by which instructions*, accompanied with the efficacious grace of the Spirit, converts were made in Apostolic times, and are to be made in all ages of the world. And these instructions, sanctioned by the very attestation which sanctioned them when first

delivered, we have in our hands ; and may employ, in enlightening and saving the nations, just as they were employed by the Apostles.

The objection is, then, of no validity ; and the evidence of the facts to which I have adverted remains unimpaired, and direct, and conclusive ; evincing, that it is the will of Jesus Christ, and the direction of his inspired Apostles, that, in labouring for the temporal and spiritual improvement of the idolatrous and barbarous nations, we make it our primary object to Christianize them.

2. And now, let us look, *secondly*, at the *testimony of facts that have taken place since the times of the Apostles*. And here, I will pass over the various efforts that have been made in other ages for the spread of Christianity, and direct your attention, at once, to the benevolent exertions of the present day. And this I do, not because the ages which succeeded the Apostles, down to the present, furnish no facts to my purpose. All the facts which they present, at all applicable to the subject, are directly to my purpose.* But we have not time for so extended an examination. And, of the experience of uninspired men, that must be most valuable to us, which has been had in the very circumstances in which we wish to be instructed how to proceed. And this, too, is, emphatically, the age of missionary effort ; and, I add without the fear of being contradicted by any man who has knowledge on the subject, of missionary success.

* The venerable ELIOT has been adduced as a witness in favour of the plan of proceeding against which the argument is here directed, inasmuch as he formed the Indians, among whom he laboured with such Apostolic zeal and success, into a little community, and gave them a simple institute of civil polity, and had them taught various domestic and mechanic arts. See the Sermon before this Society in 1823. But to make the example in point, the advocates for first civilizing the Indians, should shew, that Eliot *deferred efforts to instruct them in the Christian religion till after they were in a measure civilized*. But this they can never do. While instructing them in domestic and mechanic arts, he was every day preaching to them ; and using other means to bring them under the transforming influence of Christian doctrines. This was always his *primary* object. And so it was with BRAINARD, and the MAYHEWS, and all others, who, in the last and preceding centuries, laboured so successfully to reform and Christianize the North American Indians.

In no age since the Apostles, have such exertions been made, and in none has so much been effected, in spreading the Gospel through the earth. The standard of the cross has been planted in every clime, and on every shore. Hundreds of thousands of children and adults have been brought under Christian instruction. Thousands and tens of thousands of souls have, hopefully, been born again, among pagan and barbarous nations. Whole countries have cast away their idols, and received Jehovah as their God. And of a whole people, who were, within the memory of some of us, sunk in the lowest depths of barbarism and idolatry, it is declared, by the very best authority, that they are now the most thoroughly Christian of any entire nation on the earth.* What, then, is the testimony of this age on the subject before us ?

In answering the question, I am compelled to express my unfeigned regret, that I cannot adduce the results of any experiments made by the advocates of the first of the plans we are examining. They have said much about the want of wisdom, and the waste of zeal and treasure and lives, in those who have been aiming directly at Christianizing the nations. But no one of them has yet been found having the practical, matter-of-fact benevolence, to renounce the pleasures of country and of home, and take his life in his hand, and go forth to some barbarous nation, and exhibit the folly of the plan of proceeding he condemns, by shew-

* See letters of the deputation of the London Missionary Society—Messrs. Tyreman and Bennett, from the Society Islands. “A nation of pilferers,” they say, “have become eminently trust-worthy. A people, formerly universally addicted to lasciviousness, have become modest and virtuous in the highest degree. Those who, a few years ago, despised all forms of religion except their own horrid and cruel superstitions, have universally declared in favour of Christianity; study diligently those parts of the Christian Scriptures which have been translated, ask earnestly for more, and appear conscientiously to regulate themselves by the sacred oracles.” A similar revolution, much more rapid and nearly as complete, has been effected by the blessing of God on the American mission at the Sandwich Islands; and results equally delightful are fast producing, by the same means, among the Cherokee and Choctaw nations of Indians, and among various other, civilized and uncivilized, Heathens.

ing, in actual results, the superior wisdom of his own. Now we say, in the sincerity of our hearts, we do exceedingly regret this. For we should love to witness the benevolent acts, as well as to read the benevolent effusions, of these men. We should love to have them brought out from the uncertainties of speculation about their favourite scheme, into the region of sober fact. And we should love, in this discussion, to give, honestly and fairly, the results of their labours. But this they have not enabled us to do: and we must content ourselves with examining the experiments that have been made by others.

And in doing this, we might refer to the history of missions carried on of late years, by any or all of the different denominations of evangelical Christians; and from all we should receive the same unequivocal and decisive testimony. I shall direct your attention, however, to the missions of but a single denomination,—the MORAVIANS. And this I shall do, chiefly, for two reasons: *first*, because their efforts for the propagation of Christianity have been made, for the most part, among savages in the very lowest state of degradation, where no allowance can be required for any preparation in their previous condition; and, *secondly*, because, it is agreed, on all hands, that they have been the most judicious and successful of all the supporters of modern missions. Says a decided advocate of the views opposed in this discourse, “Of all who have attempted to teach Christianity to barbarous and savage nations, the Moravian brethren may fairly be placed at the head.”* “They have, more than any other proselytizing institution or division of Christians, united wisdom with their pious earnestness to convert the Heathen.”† What, then, has been the course pursued by the Moravians? and what is the testimony of their experience on the subject before us?

* Edinburgh Review—Vol. 21, page 66. † Do.—Vol. 8, page 437.

They began their missions to the Heathen in 1732 : and, though a very small denomination, with exceedingly limited pecuniary resources, in 1822, they had, in various Heathen countries, more than *thirty* settlements, in which were employed about *an hundred and sixty* missionaries, having the care of more than *twenty-eight thousand converts*.* These settlements are in Greenland, in North and South America, in the West Indies, in Tartary, Persia, and Egypt, in the Islands of the Indian ocean, and in southern Africa. And in all of them, you will see well-organized and happy communities ;—the filthy Hottentot and Greenlander, exhibiting the decencies of civilized life—the roving savage of America divested of his irregular habits and his barbarous cruelty ; all furnishing a beautiful exemplification of the morality and the spirit of genuine Christianity.

And now by what process have these delightful results been produced ? A certain philosophical traveller,† having visited their stations in South Africa, and being delighted with the visible effects of their labours, without observing or inquiring in what manner they were prosecuted, set himself to speculate on the principles from which such results must have originated ; and, upon his return to his native country, published to the world that “the Moravians, instead of preaching to the natives the mysterious parts of the Gospel, instructed them in useful and industrious habits ; instead of building a church, they erected a store-house. And their labours were crowned with complete success.” This testimony was eagerly caught up by a certain distinguished periodical, and held forth to the public as convincing evidence, that the only way to effect the eventual conversion of pagan and barbarous nations is first to civilize them.‡ But the Moravians themselves, whom the reviewer meant to compliment, “felt themselves insult-

* United Brethrens' Missionary Intelligencer, 1822, page 3. † Barrow.

‡ Edinburgh Review, Vol. 8—page 432.

ed by his eulogium, and were the first to come forward and deny his assertions.”* And no one at all acquainted with the history of their missions needs be told, that his statements were utterly without foundation. They have always acted on the directly opposite system. They have, indeed, carried with them, among the savage tribes to whom they have gone, the arts and usages of civilized life ; and these they have recommended, by their example, and, to some extent, by their instructions. But this has always been with them a secondary object ; their *principal* efforts, wherever they go in the prosecution of their benevolent work, being, at once and continually, directed to the communication of the knowledge and the sanctifying power of Christian truth.

The first question is, therefore, decided by the word of God, and by the continued testimony of his providence and his grace. If we would successfully employ our instrumentality in extending among the idolatrous nations of the earth the temporal and spiritual blessings which we enjoy, we must make it our direct and primary object to *Christianize* them.

II. We proceed to inquire, *secondly*, in endeavouring to Christianize the nations of the earth, what method shall we pursue ? SHALL WE TEACH THEM, AT FIRST, ONLY THE SIMPLER AND MORE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF OUR RELIGION ? OR SHALL WE, AT ONCE, PRESENT AND URGE UPON THEIR ACCEPTANCE ITS MOST SUBLIME AND DISTINCTIVE TRUTHS ? †

On this point, also, you are aware that directly opposite opinions have been advanced and advocated, by persons professing the same desire to see the blessed influences of Christianity universally diffused. On the one hand, it is maintained, that missionaries ought to bring out at once, and continu-

* Memoirs of John Urquhart, Vol. 1—page 93. † The reasoning under this head is, throughout, as applicable to civilized as to uncivilized Heathen.

ally to make most prominent, in their instructions to the Heathen, and to urge upon their attention with tender and persevering earnestness, the great peculiarities of the Christian system, the incarnation of the Son of God, the propitiation made in his blood for the sins of the world, the lost condition of unrenewed men, the necessity of their renovation by the Holy Spirit, and the endless happiness or misery depending on the character formed in the present life. On the other hand it is contended, that those who are labouring for the conversion of the Heathen, will be "far more likely to promote among them the cause of religion and virtue, if, instead of inculcating these mysterious doctrines, they would enforce on the attention of their hearers those divine precepts which embody the principles of a morality the purest and most perfect the world has ever known."* A radical mistake, it has been alledged, in the conductors of modern missions has been, that, "instead of adapting instruction to the capacity and powers of comprehension of the ignorant Heathen,—nay, instead even of teaching them 'which be the first principles of the oracles of God,' they commenced with inculcating those sublime doctrines which the most cultivated minds must be expanded to comprehend, and made the belief of profound mysteries the first requisite;" "while others, still more inconsistently, introduced the abstruse dogmas of metaphysical theology, which puzzle the intellect, instead of the simple and intelligible moral precepts of the Gospel, which have a reforming and purifying influence on the temper and conduct."†

Which of these directly opposite views is correct?

In answering the question, we appeal, as before, not to *a priori* reasonings, but to facts.

I. And we again refer you, *first*, to the example of the

* Memoirs of Urquhart, Vol. 1—page 84. † Sermon preached before this Society in 1823, by Thaddeus Mason Harris, D. D., page 11.

Apostles. Their efforts for the conversion of the Heathen were, every where, attended with immediate and most wonderful success. And this result, we have seen, was effected, not by the direct instrumentality of the miracles they wrought, but of the religious truths which they inculcated, and which we are to inculcate, among the nations.

In what order and method, then, did they inculcate the Christian doctrines? The Apostle of the Gentiles shall answer. “The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach CHRIST CRUCIFIED; unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ, *the power of God*, and *the wisdom of God*.” “When I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know ANY thing among you, save JESUS CHRIST, and him CRUCIFIED.” “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This most successful propagator of Christianity among Pagan nations, acting under the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit, made the atonement accomplished by the humiliation and death of the Son of God, wherever he went, the grand and prominent subject of his instructions. And so did all the Apostles. And in doing this, they were, and were intended by the Spirit who guided them to be, models for all propagators of Christianity among the nations to the end of the world. What more direct and convincing evidence can be desired that, if we would secure the blessing of God to give efficacy to our efforts for the conversion of the Heathen, we must make the atonement of Christ the great and prominent subject of our instructions?

2. And now look again, *secondly*, at the testimony furnished by the history of modern missions. And here, too, I might refer you to the experience of any, or of all the de-

nominations of evangelical Christians who have, of late years, been actively engaged in sending the Gospel to the Heathen, and present you with the same unequivocal and decisive testimony. But, as before, I shall direct your attention only to the Moravians. And this I shall do, not only for the reasons stated in the former instance, but also for the additional one, that, of both the methods of procedure now under examination, these devoted servants of Christ have made a thorough trial.

Their second mission was established in Greenland, in 1733.* And for a series of years, using at the same time every means to gain the confidence and affection of the savages around them, they were most assiduous in teaching them only such truths of the Christian system as are commonly regarded as of a preliminary nature,—the being and character of God, the creation of the world, the fall of man, and the requirements of the divine law. And what was the effect of this, apparently, most rational mode of proceeding, pursued with a fidelity and a patience which will never be surpassed ? “Shew us,” their auditors would say, “the God you describe, then we will believe in him, and serve him. You represent him as so great that we cannot come near him, neither will he trouble himself about us. We have prayed to him when we were sick, or had nothing to eat, but he heard us not. What you say of him, therefore, we think, is not true ; or, if you know him better than we do, then do ye, by your prayers, obtain for us plenty of food, health of body, and a dry house ; for these are all the things we either desire, or want. We have healthy souls already ; we need nothing but a sound body, and enough to eat. You are a different kind of people from us. In your country, perhaps, persons may have diseased souls : we have proof of this, indeed, in those who come hither ; they are good for nothing ; they may, therefore, stand in

* Their first mission, to St. Thomas in the West Indies, had been commenced in the preceding year.

need of a Saviour and a physician for the soul. Your heaven and your spiritual pleasures may be good enough for you ; but they would be tiresome to us. We must have seals, and birds, and fishes ; these we shall not find in your heaven ; and therefore we will leave it to you, and the worthless part of the Greenlanders. As for us, we will go down to Torngarsuck ; there we shall find abundance of every thing, without toil or trouble.”* “ If the missionaries tarried more than one night with them, they employed every species of art to entice them to their wanton, dissolute practices ; and when they failed in this, they endeavoured to weary and provoke them, by mocking and mimicking their reading, singing, praying, or by accompanying these sacred exercises with their hideous howling, or the beat of their drums. They took occasion, from their external poverty, to ridicule them with the keenest sarcasms ; and if the Brethren replied, that they did not come to Greenland for the sake of outward advantages, as good eating and drinking, but to teach them the will of God and the way to heaven, they taunted them, saying, ‘ Fine fellows, indeed, to be our teachers ! We know very well, ye yourselves are ignorant, and must learn your lesson from others.’ All this rudeness the Brethren bore with patience, meekness, and serenity : but the savages, instead of being softened by their gentle behaviour, were only encouraged to abuse them the more. They pelted them with stones, seized many of their goods, and shattered them to pieces. Nay, they were so cruel as to attempt to spoil their boat, or to drive it out to sea, which would have deprived them of their chief means of subsistence. And they even, with naked knives in their hands, threatened their lives.”†

At length, in 1738, five years after the commencement of their labours, there was a providential occurrence, destined

* Brown’s History of Missions, Vol. 1—page 305. † Do. Vol. 1—page 303.

to have a most important influence, not only on this mission, but on the conversion of the Heathen throughout the world. Some Southlanders happened to visit the Brethren, as one of them was writing out a fair copy of a translation of the Gospel. They were curious to know what was in the book ; and, on hearing read the history of Christ's agony in the garden, one of the savages, named KAIARNAK, stepped up to the table, and in an earnest, affecting manner, said, 'How was that ? Tell me it once more, for I also would fain be saved.' These words, the like of which the missionary had never heard from the lips of a Greenlander, penetrated his whole soul, so that the tears rolled down his cheeks, while he gave an account of the life and death of Christ, and of the plan of salvation through him ; describing, with more than ordinary force and energy, his sufferings in the garden and on the cross. The savages listened with fixed attention ; and some of them requested that they might be taught to pray : and when the missionaries did pray with them, they frequently repeated their expressions, that so they might not forget them. And, on leaving, they said they would come again, and hear of these things. And from that period, KAIARNAK made frequent visits to the Brethren, and at length took up his residence with them : and, after about a year, giving satisfactory evidence of a work of grace on his heart, he was received into the Church.

As yet, however, the missionaries had made no definite change in their method of instructing the people. And soon, KAIARNAK left them, to return to his countrymen in the South. After about a year's absence, he returned, to their unspeakable joy ; bringing with him a brother and his family ; and saying, that all he had heard from the missionaries he had made known to his countrymen ; that he had endeavoured, while absent, to hold communion with the Saviour ; and that he should never leave the Brethren again.

The missionaries now began to perceive the import of the dealings of God's providence and grace with them in the case of this individual. And the result was, a deliberate determination to make a material change in their manner of instructing the savages around them. From this period, 1740, they directed the attention of all to whom they could get access, "in the first instance, to Christ Jesus,—to his incarnation, his life, and especially his sufferings and death." And, immediately, was this method of instruction followed with signal and extended success. "It illuminated the darkened understandings" of the miserable objects of their benevolent exertions, "melted their stubborn hearts, and kindled in their cold icy breasts the flame of spiritual life."*

Nor was this new mode of instruction confined to the Greenlanders. Similar views in relation to the relative importance of Christian doctrines had, about the same time, by some remarkable circumstances, been impressed on the minds of the Brethren at home.† The missionaries in Greenland gave speedy information of the change in their method of instruction, with its causes and effects. And the same method of proceeding was forthwith adopted in all the Moravian missions; and has, in all of them, been ever since pursued, with the same instructive and happy results. And now, the recorded testimony of these indefatigable and most successful labourers in converting the Heathen, is, that "experience has taught them, that little is effected by beginning," in attempting to propagate Chris-

* This account of the Greenland mission is abridged from Brown's History of Missions, Vol. 1.—pp. 309—320.

† These circumstances are narrated in Cranz's History of the Brethren. They occurred at *Hurnhut*, the principal residence of the Moravians, in 1734. From that period they have, in their discourses and in their devotional exercises, dwelt, much more than they had previously done, on the person and redemption of Christ, "especially the merits of his holy incarnation, life, passion and death, for reconciliation, and the sanctification of the human soul and body in all the circumstances of life, as their comfort and example." Cranz, § 120. See also the Liturgy and Hymns of the United Brethren, which every where exhibit this peculiar feature.

tianity among Pagans, “with the principles of natural religion, as the existence of God, the perfections of his nature, or the duties of morality, in order to prepare them for receiving the Gospel :” and that, “after many years trial, in different countries, and under every variety of circumstances, they have found, that the simple testimony of the sufferings and death of Christ, delivered by a missionary possessed of an experienced sense of his love, is the most certain and the most effectual method of converting the Heathen.”*

And now listen to the individual testimony of one of their most remarkable converts. He was a North American Indian. When the missionary came to his tribe “he was,” says the history, “the greatest drunkard in the whole town ; he was quite outrageous in sin, and had even rendered himself a cripple by his debaucheries.” But soon he was remarkably and permanently changed. “The drunkard had learned to be sober ; and the man, who was as savage as a bear, had become mild and peaceful as a lamb. He afterwards gave the Brethren the following simple” and instructive “account of his conversion. “I,” said he, “have been a heathen, and have grown old among the heathen ; therefore I know how the heathen think. Once a preacher came, and began to tell us that there was a God. We answered him, saying, ‘Dost thou think us so ignorant as not to know that ? Go back to the place from whence thou camest.’ Then another preacher came to us, and began to say, ‘You must not steal, nor lie, nor get drunk.’ To him we answered, ‘Thou fool ; dost thou think that we do not know that ? Learn first thyself, and then teach thy own

* Brown’s History of Missions, Vol. 2—pp. 107, 109. “It is proper, however, to remark,” the historian adds, “that, though the Brethren make the death of Christ the grand subject of their preaching among the Heathen, they by no means confine their instructions to this particular point. There is no part of divine truth, whether of a doctrinal or practical nature, but what they endeavour, by degrees, to instil into the minds of their converts.”

people to leave off these 'practices ; for who steal, or lie, or are more drunken, than the white men ?' Thus we dismissed him. After some time brother RAUCH* came into my hut, and sat down by me. He then spoke to me as follows : ' I am come to you in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth. He sends to let you know that he will make you happy, and deliver you from that misery in which you at present lie. For this purpose He became a man, gave his life a ransom, and shed his blood for you.' When he had finished his discourse, he lay down upon a board, fatigued by his journey, and fell into a sound sleep. I then thought, ' What kind of a man is this ? There he sleeps. I might kill him, and throw him into the wood, and who would regard it ? But this gives him no care or concern.' At the same time, I could not forget his words. They constantly recurred to my mind. Even when I slept, I dreamed of that blood which Christ shed for us. I found this to be something different from what I ever heard before ; and I interpreted brother RAUCH's words to the other Indians. Thus, through the grace of God, an awakening began among us. *Brethren, preach Christ our Saviour, and his sufferings and death, if you would have your words to gain entrance among the heathen.*" †

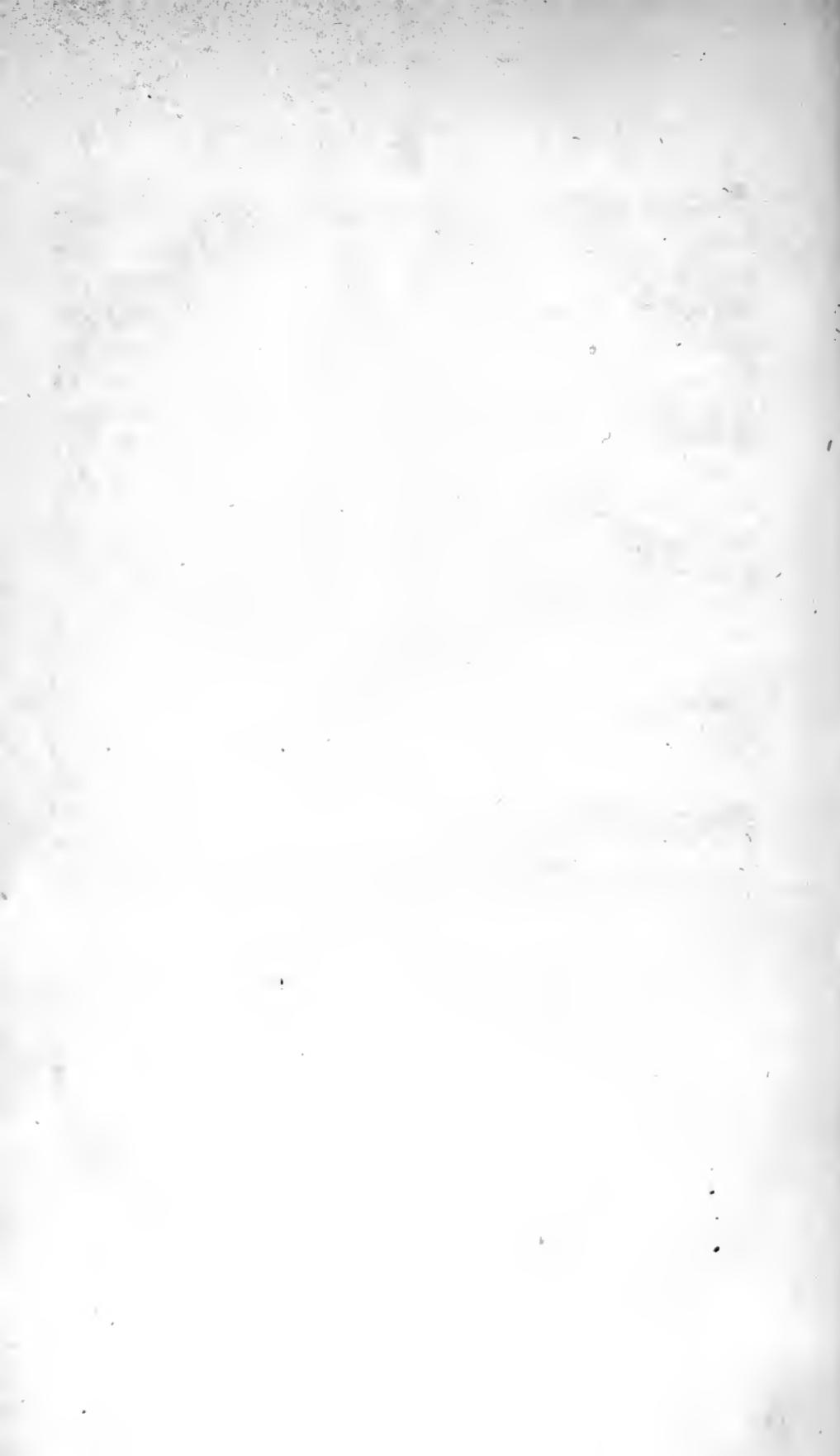
I, surely, need not add another word. The position is demonstrated. The only effectual way to attempt the conversion of the Heathen is, at once, to preach to them, and urge upon their acceptance, the distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel, especially the incarnation of the Son of God, and his vicarious sufferings and death. This, and this alone, will illuminate their darkened understandings, melt their stubborn hearts, and kindle in their icy breasts the flame of spiritual life, and bring them to the enjoyment of the substantial blessings of civilization and true religion.

* Christian Heury Rauch, the Moravian Missionary who had been instrumental in his conversion.

† Brown's History of Missions, Vol. 1—pp. 396, 397.

We see, then, brethren of this Society, what is our duty in the discharge of the sacred trust committed to us. We must employ, and send forth, to our destitute settlements, and to the Indian tribes, such missionaries, and only such, as have learned by experience, the deep moral ruin of the human race, and the subduing and transforming efficacy of redeeming love ; and, with hearts full of compassion for their perishing fellow-men and of zeal for the glory of Christ in their salvation, will, at once and continually, with the tenderest affection and at any sacrifice, endeavour to bring those to whom we send them to know and feel the power of the simple testimony of the dying of the Lord Jesus as the propitiation for our sins. If we persevere in this course, we shall obey the instructions of the providence and the word of God ; we shall be faithful to the trust committed to us ; we shall essentially contribute to the salvation and civilization of men. If we pursue a different course, we shall disregard the unequivocal directions of the providence and the word of God ; we shall be unfaithful to the trust reposed in us by those who contributed the funds committed to our care ; we shall bestow our labours in vain.

The Lord give us grace to be faithful ; and to pursue the course which he approves, and will attend with his effectual blessing.



BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 9999 06571 397 4

